

"Emerging Patterns In The Family"

C-22 Writing Requirement

submitted by

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## I. INTRODUCTION

For several years the storm clouds have hung low over American homes. The condition many families find themselves in today has not happened "over night" or is just the result of one factor which has chopped at the foundation of the home. Erosion has come from many areas, and yet people wonder what has happened to family life.

For middle aged and older people, they reflect that the home of today is not like it was when they were children. The home is not the same because society is not the same. When one out of four marriages ends in divorce, (sometimes after twenty or more years), it is not difficult to surmise that the American home of today is in trouble.

It is a big gap from the pre-television era to the present. In the by-gone days children were supposed to be seen and not heard, and often found they had to wait for the "second table" at a Sunday dinner when "company" came to eat. Children of today demand to be free from parental authority by the time they reach puberty, and have no qualms about giving a lot of trouble at home or out in public. Lack of family harmony, separation, and divorce has taken its toll on the mental instability and unrest among children.

Many husbands and wives do not have the love, respect, admiration, loyalty, and faithfulness that it takes to keep their marriage fresh, exciting, and on a solid foundation. They may be "unequally yoked" in more ways than one and this breeds trouble. What to do about it is what they face daily.

In this paper I plan to deal with some of the factors which cause trouble in the American home. I wish someone had the solution to this national problem.

## II. THE FATHER FIGURE

The word "father" usually evokes images of power that might or might not be tempered with a pinch of kindness or understanding. The old-fashioned father was a pretty grim fellow, long on commands and short on humor. He was supposed to be right on everything that concerned the family. When he made a mistake, it had better be ignored. In the language of the Women's Lib, he was, without question, a "male chauvinist pig." Tyrant and protector, provider and judge, he was symbol of that grand old institution, the family, and the power that shored up authority throughout society.

That image has been weakening for a long time because the old patriarchal structure of life became obsolete, another casualty of the urban life style, of mobility, of the demands on the modern economy. Father simply can't ride herd on the kids as he once did, because he isn't around. Authority doesn't thrive on discontinuity.

The desperate mother who meets her weary husband at the door with a full account of the children's sins of the day is now frowned upon.

Fatherhood was a unifying principle, a strength that made possible the difficult connections of brotherhood. What about motherhood? Perhaps the identification of strength and authority with the paternal symbol is, as some advocates of Women's Liberation would say, no more than a remnant of the past. But that symbolism has deep and powerful roots and can neither be disregarded nor lightly changed. No transition has yet occurred, and the danger is not so much the change of an ancient symbol as the breakdown of a unifying principle. We have no way of

divorcing our new goals from our ancient roots.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Leontine Young, The Fractured Family (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1973), pp. 63-74.

### III. THE MOTHER FIGURE

What a fantastic undertaking to be a mother in a democracy where every boy can grow up to surpass his father, or perhaps even become President! It all depends on how well mother helps him to swim in the swirling currents of social change.

Mothers wanted their children to become independent because the culture told them that was right, but they also wanted to keep them from getting into trouble because their instincts told them that that was right. Young boys should be allowed to do daring things but they should not get hurt. Adolescent girls should be venturesome but not get pregnant. Is it any wonder that inconsistency often resulted?

With the decline of father's authority, mothers become the obvious target for the desire of children to test limits. Shouts and even blows directed by small children against Mom are common. But the tensions caused for "super mothers" by aggressive children in the absence of father has been an American phenomenon for many generations.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Lawrence H. Fuchs, Family Matters (New York: Random House, 1972), pp. 111-112.

#### IV. WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Wherever women meet and talk, the question arises: What are the feminists up to? While they say they hope to improve women's lives, the way they say it seems to antagonize many women. Many housewives feel that the movement puts them down and turns them off. They object to the implication that women who stay at home are less adequate than those who hold down jobs.

Feminists maintain that what the woman does at home is an important part of life that can be shared by men, too. They insist that they are not prejudiced against domestic life, just as long as it's freely chosen.

Family Circle Magazine interviewed feminist Caroline Bird, author of several books, including Born Female, and is mother of a 12 year old son. Some of Ms. Bird's statements are as follows:

. . . staying at home isn't a real option unless women can make as much money and have as good a life as men. Women can't really get as far in their careers as men can, so even a young woman never knows whether she's choosing a domestic life because she prefers it or because it's the lesser of two evils.

Ms. Bird continues:

I find that women who have been good homemakers have all kinds of skills--executive, human relations, nurturing, money skills--but they have no way of showing it to an employer because they have lived outside the mainstream that tests people. You can be a poor housewife or a great housewife, but as long as you're not measured, you won't have the satisfaction of being able to view your accomplishments objectively. Women need to know that they are doing something appreciated by people other than their immediate family.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Rollie Hoohstein, "Is Homemaking Obsolete," Family Circle Magazine, October 1974, pp. 135, 178.

"I'm a person, not just a wife and mother." This common complaint actually has a legal origin. Until recently the law treated a corporation as a person, but did not recognize a woman except in specified circumstances.

The Industrial Revolution emphasized the difference between men and women, as some of their machinery could be operated by women and some by men. The Industrial Revolution which created the working woman also created her more influential mirror image, the lady of leisure. The role was embarrassing in an egalitarian, work-oriented society. The role of "lady" quickly became the model for all women, and most girls hoped that marriage would bring them this status.<sup>4</sup>

Come Lib with Me.  
 Little we thought it would come to this  
 When I was Master and when you were Miss.  
 Little we thought of anything save kisses  
 When I your Mr. was and you my Mrs.  
 Nor counted we the cost nor gave a damn,  
 In days and nights when we were Sir and Ma'am.  
 But now two singles are what once was twain.  
 Our each to eachness now . . . Auf Weidersehn.  
 For equal opportunity only is,  
 Now I your CHAUVINIST am and you my Ms.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Caroline Bird, Born Female (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1974), pp. 16-21.

<sup>5</sup>Will Stanton, "Come Lib with Me," Women's Day Magazine, October 1974, p. 18.



## V. THE MARRIAGE

Someone described marriage this way:

For the first couple of months I felt as if I were slipping in and out of being married. Some days I knew I was a married man; other days I felt like my old self.

The robes and roles of marriage won't quite fit until they have been worn for a time, when the husband remains a "bachelor" or the wife a "baby doll" forever, then the marriage is in trouble.

Most couples are not going to be perfectly matched. Usually there is an adjustment, and marriage balances off or satisfies the basic common drives to both parties. Marriage will change a person. You won't recognize the person you are today after twenty years of marriage. Some of your values will persist, your way of looking at things, your special self, despite the influence of your partner. If you can grant yourself the freedom to keep on being you, you'll be able to respect the identity of the one you married.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Mary Anne Guitar, The Young Marriage (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1968), pp. xiii-10.

## VI. THERAPY FOR TROUELED MARRIAGES

A couple may be continually fighting, and if the therapist tells them to go home and keep peace, it is doubtful that they will. If he directs them to go home and have a fight, the fight will be a different kind when it happens. For example, a husband might say that they fight continually because his wife constantly nags. The wife might say they fight because the husband does not understand her and never does what she asks. The therapists relabel or redefine their fighting in a variety of ways: He might suggest that they are not fighting effectively because they are not expressing what is really on their minds, he can suggest that their fighting is a way of gaining an emotional response from each other and they both need that response, he might say that when they begin to feel closer to each other they panio and have a fight, or he can suggest that they fight because inside themselves is a feeling they do not deserve a happy marriage.

When directed to have a fight, the couple may find it is difficult for them to continue in their usual pattern. They are particularly tempted toward more peace at home if the therapist says they must fight, and that they must for certain reasons which they do not like. The couple can only disprove him by fighting less.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Jay Haley, Strategies of Psychotherapy (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1963), p. 144.

## VII. A NEW VIEW OF DIVORCE

The 1848 Women's Rights Convention argued that the promise of obedience in the marriage contract was a hideous barbarity that should be abolished. Along with the feminist attack on obedience in the marriage vow was a totally new (for a large group) view of divorce.

Throughout history, divorce was a male prerogative which left women defenseless and in disgrace. In America radically different conditions permitted a radically new female view on divorce. Divorcees could travel freely and maintain a good reputation. Where women were scarce, especially in the West, they had a good chance for remarriage. Given proper protection, women began to see divorce, not as a disgrace, but an opportunity for freedom and independence.

The American divorce rate has been steady (one divorce to four marriages) in recent years, but it is still about double that for Western Europe. Women initiate legal action in almost seven out of eight divorce cases (in the United States), whether they actually desired a divorce or not.

Compared with women in other countries, the American wife enjoys enormous power in the divorce court. In the United States a divorcee usually gets at least one-third of the husband's annual earnings.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Lawrence H. Fuchs, Family Matters (New York: Random House, 1972), pp. 106-108.

## VIII. THE ONE-PARENT HOME

Children can be a problem even for the best adjusted of married couples, so naturally there are additional difficulties when there is only one parent left to assume the roles normally played by both.

A disproportionate number of single parents with custody of their children are women, there are also many men. Where the mother is obviously unfit, the children will usually be given into the custody of the father. Even the choice of the community may influence which parent a child goes with. There are some instances in which the father is far more interested in the welfare of the children. In such a case, the mother may relinquish her claim to them.

There are some guiding principles which may be helpful to the single parent in his efforts to help his child (children) develop and mature to good citizenship:

- A. The child still needs a parent (authority figure).
- B. The child still needs love and respect from an adult.
- C. The child must not be allowed to feel responsible for the divorce.
- D. The child should be encouraged to continue loving the departed parent.
- E. The child should be allowed to see the absent parent at reasonable times.
- F. The child must not be the target of a hate campaign against the other parent.
- G. The child should not be made the victim of an emotional tug-of-war.

- H. The child should not be allowed to play his parents against each other.
- I. The child should be allowed to share household duties and responsibilities.
- J. The child must not be allowed to veto the parent's social life.
- K. The child's well-being depends upon the parent's well-being.
- L. The child should be encouraged to develop a social life appropriate to his age.
- M. The child should not be discouraged from forming adult friendships.
- N. The child should be introduced to his parent's dates.
- O. The child may project his antagonism toward the absent parent onto the present parent.
- P. The child should be introduced to the children of other single parents.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Howard B. Lyman, Single Again (New York: David McKay Company, 1971), pp. 195-203.

## IX. CHILDREN AND DIVORCE

There has been a neglect of the study of divorce as a specific mental health issue in children's lives. Over 6 million children of divorce are growing up in our midst today. Divorce is a trauma in itself with continuing reverberations for the couple. The legal event of divorce is much less damaging than the "emotional" divorce and that within the family exist the forces which will affect the child.

There is the distorted development of the one-parent child, often the increased vulnerability and probability of problems in sex-role identification and super-ego development. This experience will be influenced by such variables as the time of the loss, the child's sex, and, most important, the child's relationship with the remaining parent.<sup>10</sup>

The child often interprets the experience of separation as an expression of hostility on the part of the parent, and to assume that this action was justified by the child's wrongdoing, the child then identifying with the hostile rejecting parent, accepting the fantasy of a crime that deserves punishment, then assumes the guilt which such an act requires. For example, a child who begins to steal after a divorce, acts out feelings of deprivation, then says that his stealing was the reason for the divorce of his parents.

In more obvious cases, children with physical handicaps or serious illness seem to be the focus. Many times the unplanned and unwanted child's conception and birth was directly linked with increasing marital tensions ultimately leading to divorce, with lingering

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<sup>10</sup>John F. McDermott, Jr., "Divorce and Its Psychiatric Sequelae in Children," Archives of General Psychiatry, November 1970, pp. 412-427.

reverberations in the child mediated through the remaining parent.

Often the child saw the father's resistance to payment of alimony as a reflection of the child's own worth. One child referred to alimony as "the ransom," suggesting his fantasied involvement in a theme of cruel desertion, kidnapping and blackmail.<sup>11</sup>

It has been noted that the renunciation of a loved object (in the oedipal period) is facilitated by becoming like that object. For example, there were links between the presenting symptoms of some oedipal-aged children and their image of the devalued father which they appeared to be living and reenacting. Some children seemed almost forced into sexual acting out when they had had fathers who were described as "no-good," oversexed, and promiscuous. Many times the mother claimed that the onset of the child's symptoms followed a visit with the father, sometime after the divorce. Eleven children were noted to have run away immediately after a visit with the father, a father who had quit the family and himself had set a precedent.

Some women will recreate the lost husband through the child's identification with his traits, and especially if the child closely resembled his father, as though there were a sense of reincarnation of the father through the child. One mother would not address her boy by his name any longer because it was the same name as her former husband's.<sup>12</sup>

In some cases a child identifies with the alternate antisocial image in the mother's thought, one in which acting out in order to

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<sup>11</sup>D. Beres, "Vicissitudes of Super-Ego Functions and Super-Ego Precursors in Childhood," Psychoanal Study Child, XIII, (1958), pp. 324-351.

<sup>12</sup>C. P. Malmquist, "Conscience Development," Psychoanal Study Child, XXIII, (1968), pp. 301-331.



In some cases a child identifies with the alternate antisocial image in the mother's thought, one in which acting out in order to re-create old situations was prominent. In these cases, the mother projected a superimposed image of the father on the child as his pseudo-identity, setting out to prove the child delinquent, lazy, stupid, bad, immoral, sometimes driving the child to flights of escape and, most commonly, fantasies that the father would rescue him. Thus he experienced secondary rejection for "part" of himself identified with the absent parent.

At other times, one could note the grief stricken, angry mother at the time of divorce suddenly wanting her child to be neat, clean, and "feminine," an extension of herself.

Boys tend to resent having to fulfill the role of the male in the family. The sudden change in masculine roles following a divorce challenges the boy prematurely in ways which are too threatening for him. Because of a mother's hostility to her former husband, the result in the need for "boys to stick together," produced the emergence of a typically delinquent pattern.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> A. Johnson, "Juvenile Delinquency," The American Handbook of Psychiatry, (1959), pp. 181-190.



## X. SINGLE AGAIN

One problem the man has to face is that of becoming a periodic father. It's different than anything that most divorced women have to face.

In the movie, "Divorce American Style," a son says to his newly divorced dad: "It's like you always had a list of stuff you had to do, but now I'm on it."

Distance of geographical separation is the chief determinant of frequency of visit. You might see your children often, or maybe once or twice a year at vacation time. Just as anyone is more appreciative of what he no longer has, the newly divorced father often comes to a greater and truer appreciation of his children than he ever had while living with them and their mother. Now having sole responsibility for them for a given amount of time, he's more likely to give them his undivided attention than he ever was before.<sup>14</sup>

A woman who had been married for a few years, (with no children), felt it was best to terminate a marriage which was hopelessly troubled. During her marriage she had blamed most of her trouble on the relationship with her husband. After the divorce she was surprised to find herself experiencing many of the same inner problems. She was still subject to mood swings, anxiety and frustration, only this time she had no one to blame but herself. Cutting loose from a marriage was complex, the bonds subtle and deep, and do not fall away merely because one moves out of the house, she regretfully learned.

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<sup>14</sup>Howard B. Lyman, Single Again (New York: David McKay Company, 1971), pp. 177-188.

Another woman of forty told her story that when she was 35, she took a job at a television station. She soon became involved with a producer. In the light of her new found lover she found herself turned on sexually as her husband had not been able to do. Her marriage seemed loveless, boring and intolerably empty as all her thoughts centered on her lover. Finally after two years she filed for a divorce.

Her romance with the producer did not last as long as the divorce proceedings.

When it became possible for us to be a real couple instead of a lurking romance, the relationship fell apart, she said. He was afraid of commitment, and I couldn't play the on-again-off-again game.

I really couldn't go back to my husband. But if I'd known before what it's like out here, I might have had a different approach to our marriage. If I were back in the spot now . . . Well, I guess I'd still go ahead and jump, but I'd be shaking in my boots.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Leslie Green, "Why I Miss Being Married," Women's Day Magazine, November 1974, pp. 51-52, 212.

## XI. SUMMARY

1975 has been declared by the United Nations to be the "International Year of the Woman." From research on "Emerging Pattern in the Family," and from personal observations, this honor should be given to men, to give them some recognition. Women have since World War II, exerted tremendous influence on the changing role of the family.

In this summary, I'll present a few areas of strong influence, which have caused the home (whether good or bad) to be what it is today:

A. The woman decides the development and growth of the family. The area of propagation is controlled by the woman. Up to the present there is no medical type of contraceptive available for the man. Abortion will never be for a man. Men must, or can only, have the children women want to have.

B. The woman decides the standards for society. The standards of value of a person are impressed in early childhood by a person the child relates to, which is usually female. Almost all children are reared by their mothers. When the children are not at home they are under female supervision in Day Care Centers, Nurseries, and Kindergartens. Most of the teachers in Elementary School are female. Women therefore hold a key position in the rearing and educating of children. That means they breed into the following generation their own standards of value. The sex-role behavior of men is greatly influenced by women. From childhood a boy learns that a gentleman is never supported by a woman, but (men) must provide the support. This manipulation leads to the greater percentage of men who, out of necessity, provide all the support for their wives and children. Only a minimal number of women

support their husband and children.

C. Women decide politics. Since the woman does not have all the stress and strain of our existence fight, she outlives men by an average of six years. Consequently it means that there are more female than male voters. Political parties are wise when they make their appeal to women voters. So it would seem that even when men are engaged in high positions of government, they must depend on women to support, and keep them in office.

D. The woman decides the economy. According to statistics, the woman makes the most buying decisions in the family. Only when specific knowledge is required, does the husband seem to share with the wife in the decision. Television commercials appeal to the woman in the home, from laundry detergent commercials and beauty aids, to the luxurious interiors of automobiles which would appeal to a woman. A woman would not be attracted to a car if it had all the conveniences and looks of a tractor. Radio, television, and magazine ads must appeal to women if they are to remain in business. Yes, women have much to do with our economic development.

E. How the woman uses her powers. She lets the man work for her. Even though educational chances for men and women are about the same, even though the birthrate seems to be regressing, and the majority of babies are bottle fed, women seldom ever, for their whole life, support a healthy man and their mutual children. When married women work, they do it only to add to the family income, or to prevent boredom. Most women work only a few months or years. Seldom do they work like a man, without break, until they reach retirement. Those who do work until retirement, are privileged to retire from three to five years earlier

than men, then expect to live six or more years longer than the average man.

F. Courts of law favor women. Divorce courts usually rule in favor of women, regardless who is at fault. Many states now have the "no fault" divorce law where infidelity or other charges do not have to be brought forth. So the woman wins again, usually with the home, car, savings account, and a substantial amount of money each month to help support the children he wasn't allowed to keep. She may have been primarily responsible for the marriage break-up, and may be responsible for some of the juvenile problems I have mentioned, but nevertheless she comes out the winner. The public has pity on the poor defenseless woman, while the husband is looked on as a miserable creature who deserves to pay and pay because he allowed his home to fall apart.

Times have changed. Roles have changed. The father who used to "rule the roost" with an "iron hand," and whose word was law is no more. Fathers and mothers have changed; children have changed. The "Emerging Pattern in the Family" is because man has allowed his power to be usurped by women. If man is not satisfied with his role today, he shouldn't complain. He allowed it to happen!

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